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Sermons

# HE LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE

BY

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Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

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## PREFACE

THE contents of this little book, as of some earlier volumes, were originally addresses given at Quiet Days and on other occasions. I have attempted to thread them together in such a way as to work out the idea expressed in the title, which is drawn from the words 'When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive'—the divine privileges and blessings, and the heavy responsibilities and strenuous duties of those who yield themselves as captives to Christ.

The last chapter is a paper read at the Leicester Church Congress 1919, reprinted by permission of Messrs. Nisbet and Co.

A. H. McNEILE.

TRINITY COLLEGE,  
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*Add to your Index to Sph.*  
*→ Sph. 4<sup>8</sup>*

## I. CHRIST'S INTERCESSION

**C**HRISt has ascended into heaven, and He wants us to work for Him on earth. We are going to think about that work, with its privileges and difficulties. But it is worth while to spend a preliminary chapter on His Ascension. The story of it in the Acts of the Apostles does not need a long discussion. If the fact is once grasped that our Lord's Resurrection body was what S. Paul calls a 'spiritual body,' which the apostle thought of as developed into something as utterly different in kind from the body that was laid in the tomb as a full-grown plant is from a seed, it is impossible to assert that to the yearning eyes of the disciples it could not possibly mount up from the ground. It did not mount up in order to reach heaven, because heaven is not a place in the sky over our heads. But the form which they saw rose until a cloud covered it, and they then knew that His visible presence was at an end. To put it at its lowest, if it were only on a par with the apparitions of

which there are countless instances in the records of psychical research, the fact of its being seen to rise from the ground would cause no difficulty. We may believe that it was more than that ; but it cannot have been less. If psychical apparitions can do it, the risen Christ could do it.

But what we want to get at is the *meaning* of the Ascension. What does it mean for us in our spiritual life of every day ? Or to put the question as it is more often put—What is Christ doing for us in heaven ? The answer that is usually given is that He is praying for us. ‘ He ever liveth to make intercession for us.’ But anyone who thinks will probably ask—What exactly does that mean ? It sounds as if it meant that Jesus Christ is one Individual, and God the Father is another Individual, and that Christ spends His time, century after century, in talking to God, and asking Him to forgive each of the sins in endless succession of all the unnumbered millions of mankind. When put like that, the notion is, of course, impossible. But that is, in fact, the meaning that many people give to it ; and they don’t believe it, but they have nothing better to put in its place. The reason why numbers of people are unsatisfied with Christian truths is because they cannot

grasp the fact that they are spiritual and not materialistic, and must be, as S. Paul says, 'spiritually discerned.' And they are often rendered more difficult for us because so many of the great Christian writers were mystics, who grasped the truths with an intense spiritual vividness, but had no way of making them vivid to others except by materialistic imagery. Look at a verse in the book of the Revelation, the work of one of the greatest of Christian mystics. 'I saw in the midst of the throne . . . a lamb standing as though it had been slain' (v. 6). That is his description of what Christ is doing for us. He is not talking incessantly to God the Father ; in this picture He simply stands before Him as a slaughtered Lamb. What is the spiritual truth thus expressed in symbolic form ? Heaven is not a place ; it is oneness with God. We are all in Heaven at this moment in proportion to our oneness with God ; and in the case of Christ the oneness is perfect. Again, He is not 'spending His time' in doing anything. Life in Heaven is not lapse of time ; it is perfection. There is no time in oneness with God. What, then, was the writer trying to express ? Look at a human illustration. A man in civilian clothes stands before you, with a row of ribbons,

or a service badge, and one leg. He doesn't spend time in telling you that he risked life and limb in the contest of right against might. His presence before you is his witness. His one leg, and crutches, and ribbons, tell you a whole volume of stirring history. And the Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, means Christ as His passion and death made Him. We sing of His 'wounds yet visible above, in beauty glorified'; but we mean His spiritual glory, the consummation of His human personality, to which He attained by suffering, and to which He could have attained in no other way—the Captain of our salvation perfected through suffering. That is the way in which He intercedes for us—by being in perfect oneness with God, as reached through life-long suffering and trial, culminating in the grave and gate of death. The Epistle to the Hebrews states it without imagery: 'Christ entered . . . into Heaven itself, now to appear before the presence of God for us' (ix. 24).

But that is not all. What Christ does and what Christ is, can do nothing for us apart from what we do and what we are. Most religious people to-day have fortunately ceased to sum up God's method of salvation in the words—



Believe that Christ died for you, and He will do the rest. We rather say—Believe in Christ who died for you, throw yourself actively into His scheme of salvation, and He will procure forgiveness and power so that *you* may do the rest. All Christians who are partially in oneness with God, constantly spoilt by sin, and yet really striving and longing to get closer to Him, are partially in Heaven. They have reached different degrees of Heaven. I like to give that meaning to the words of Heb. iv. 14, ‘a great High Priest who hath passed through the *heavens*.’ It is another way of expressing what is said a few verses later (v. 8), that ‘He learnt obedience by the things which He suffered.’ He attained to successive degrees of spiritual completeness, until He passed through all the degrees into Heaven itself. And although we do not, as He did, perfectly respond at each stage to the test of obedience, yet it remains true of us that we are in Heaven in proportion to our holiness and love. Oh when shall we make people see that Heaven is not a geographical or astronomical locality, to which we shall be transferred after death if we are good enough! In proportion as we appear before the presence of God, that is, arrive at union with

Him, we plunge deeper and deeper into Heaven itself, now, here, every day.

And then we ask—How can I plunge deeper and deeper into Heaven? Christ did it by being slain as a Lamb ; and we must do it in the same way. Christ was not killed instead of us. He was killed that we might be killed ; He was crucified that we might be crucified. In proportion as we are crucified with Him, we are also glorified with Him, now, here, every day.

✓ A great many men and women would like to be good,\* ~~but think it is impossible. They try~~ sometimes for a little, and then they give up trying. They pray sometimes with great zeal for a little, and then their prayers become slack and formal and lifeless and hurried once more. ~~They would like to be good ;~~ but they don't like what Baron von Hügel calls the 'bracing cost' of eternal life. They don't like being crucified. They don't like the trouble of fighting ; they don't like the needful self-discipline, strong, steady, and incessant ; they don't like the labour of keeping watch over themselves ; they don't like the risk of what other people may think of them. They like to think how nice it would be to be good ; but they don't like the print of the nails, because they hurt.

But there is no other way. / We cannot get one 'inch' deeper into heaven, we cannot do anything for our own souls or for the souls of other people until we begin, in union with Christ, to appear in the presence of God, each of us, a lamb as though it had been slain.

The imagery begins to be full of the most intensely practical meaning. If Christ has ascended, by passing through all the degrees of Heaven, we must also ascend in the same way, and with Him continually dwell—not only after death in a luxury of eternal peace and happiness, but now, here, every day—continually dwell with Him in His pains and passion, pains which we take upon ourselves, as He did ; for the joy set before us, enduring the Cross, despising the shame, that we with Him may be set down at the right hand of God, and be able, as He was, to intercede for others.

But I cannot refrain from following up the passage in the book of Revelation one step further. S. John doesn't leave the matter there ; he reminds us that we cannot do all this by ourselves. He continues, in mystic fashion, his materialistic imagery : ' A lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes which are the seven spirits of

God.' The Lamb possesses the Spirit of God ; His Spirit is the Spirit of God ; and He pours it on those who ask for it. The seven horns mean perfect power, strength, force ; and the seven eyes mean perfect insight, light, knowledge. Power in obtaining blessings from Him, and knowledge how to obtain it. Power over the souls of others, and knowledge of ourselves. Power over ourselves, and knowledge of Him. All power and all knowledge are available for us if we are filled with the Spirit. He not only appears in the presence of God for us ; He also sends the sevenfold gift of the Spirit for us. So that while we look back at the Ascension, we also look forward to Pentecost. In proportion as we strive to be slain, as He was, we can also possess, as He does, the strength and the light, the force and the insight, the power and the knowledge, of the eternal Spirit of God.

## II. CHRIST'S TRIUMPH.

**T**HERE is a magnificent passage in Psalm lxviii., which S. Paul quotes in connexion with the Ascension. This Psalm, more than any other, has in it the sound of marching, the tramp of a great host. The rhythm moves with a victorious swing that is not quite like anything else in Hebrew poetry. And the reason is that the poem tells the story of two marches, the two greatest marches in the history of the chosen people. It is a drama in two parts. In the first part it is related that God brought His people out of Egyptian slavery; He went forth before them and marched through the desert. 'The earth shook and the heavens dropped at the presence of God, at the presence of God, the God of Israel.' As the march went on He sent a plentiful rain of manna and strengthened His people when they were weary. When enemies met them the poet says: 'Kings of armies did flee, did flee'; they were like snowflakes driven with the wind on Mt. Salmon. Then they came to Bashan with its high mountains; but none of them was so splendid as

Ps 68

Mt. Sion, where He at last ascended up on high. He marched to the top of the citadel, leading His people with Him. They had recently been united for the first time in His worship, and in obedience to Him ; so they were like a band of captives marching triumphantly in His train. That is the end of the first part of the drama. ]

[ And in Palestine they might have lived, under His sovereignty, in joy and happiness for ever. But they threw their privileges away. ~~The~~ Psalmist does not speak about that. He assumes that his readers know quite well the events that lead up to the second part of his poem. Those events were that through long ~~years~~ the people rejected and displeased the Most High God, and would not walk in His ways. And as a result of their sins they found themselves a second time in slavery. They found themselves by the waters of Babylon, where they sat down and wept when they remembered Zion ; they found themselves fast bound in misery and iron, because they had rebelled against the word of the Lord, and lightly regarded the counsel of the Most Highest. ]

[ This is the point (<sup>verse</sup> v. 22) at which the second part of the Psalm begins. The salvation from the slavery of Egypt repeats itself in a salvation

from the slavery of Babylon. 'The Lord said, I will bring My people again from Bashan ; Mine own will I bring again from the deep of the sea.' And so the march music begins once more : ' It is well seen, O God, how Thou goest, how Thou, my God and King, goest to the sanctuary. The singers go before, the minstrels follow after, in the midst of the damsels playing with the timbrels.' The repentant sinners, purified by suffering, give themselves up once more to God's service ; and once more He ascends to the top of the hill of Zion, leading in glorious and willing captivity His band of captives.]

[2] The human heart knows what it is to be in Egypt or Babylon. Both are types of slavery ; and both have their pleasures. But there is a difference between them. When the people murmured against Moses in the wilderness it was for lack of food and drink ; they looked back longingly at the flesh-pots of Egypt. The pleasures of Egyptian slavery were the pleasures of the body, the lowest type of pleasure, engrossing to the lowest type of mind. The Jews in Babylon, on the other hand, were engrossed by something different. For the most part they did not behave as if they were captives ; they

developed into successful merchants who had little wish to leave their flourishing business and to go back to a city in ruins. There was hope in the case of those who wept when they remembered Zion; they were the devoted few who seized the chance of returning home when it was offered to them; but the successful money-getters mostly refused it and stayed where they were. Pleasure and Business, earthly enjoyment and earthly gain, are the chief attractions which keep men from holiness. Neither need be sinful, but both very often are. The call comes to us to leave our Egypt or our Babylon, whichever it is. Christ has ascended up on high, and He is leading in captivity, as the centuries go by, an ever-growing band of joyful captives. And to each generation of men comes the question, Who follows in His train?

3 But if we are to march with Him, where does the journey begin? It does not begin with the Ascension; we should find holiness a much easier matter if it did. If in the midst of this engrossing life we could quite suddenly be lifted up from the earth; if we could by some sweeping torrent of emotion, some splendid whirlwind of spiritual rapture, be caught up with Him into



the clouds and be wafted freely and swiftly to glory, then religion would be really pleasant; we could look down from the heights and see Egypt and Babylon receding far away beneath us; fleshly desires would have no more attraction; purity and self-restraint would be an easy luxury; earthly ambitions, earthly graspings after wealth or fame, would dwindle away to their true pettiness; and we should soar, with the ascended Christ, straight and fast into the heavenly places. But holiness in fact is not easy. Our progress from Egypt or Babylon ends at Zion, but we must be prepared in either case to pass through the long, dry desert of trial. Our attempts so often seem hopeless; we fall and fall again.

*Every evil word I had spoken once,  
And every evil thought I had thought of old,  
And every evil deed I ever did,  
Awoke and cried, This Quest is not for thee!  
And lifting up mine eyes I found myself  
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns;  
And I was thirsty even unto death;  
And I too cried, This Quest is not for thee!*

So we are sometimes tempted to feel and cry.  
And yet we know that the Quest is the aim and

purpose of our being. We must remember that our journey in the Victor's train begins not with the Ascension but with the Cross. If any man will come after Me, if any man will join My band of captives, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and so only can he follow Me. It is as we are crucified with Him that we can be raised from the dead with Him to walk in newness of life, to follow Him on the upward road to glory.] That He ascended, what is it but that He first descended? And if it was necessary for Him, it cannot be less necessary for us. [Those who have begun, are apt to stand gazing up into Heaven at the glory so far above them, and they are inclined to say with St Peter in wistful impatience, Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the heavenly courts of the Lord now at once, and to be quit of this unceasing struggle, these daily battles and wounds and frequent defeats and rare and meagre victories. And the answer comes, Why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? If you are being crucified you have already begun to follow Me; and though I have passed through the heavens, I am with you still, and by means of your sorest struggles I am leading My captivity captive.]

### III. CAPTIVITY.

LET us then look a little more closely at what captivity means. As we look out upon Christ's Catholic Church, the longing desire of those who love her is that the ascended Lord should carry forward His Messianic triumph by leading captive the Christians in our land. And by Christians I mean, first of all, those who really are thought of as good people. The clergy. Oh, if Jesus Christ would only lead captive the clergy! What an unspeakable triumph it would be. Clergy in town parishes who feel themselves too busy to do anything but work. And by 'work' they often mean everything except hard, deep, earnest prayer. Clergy who imagine, or act as if they imagined, that Christianity and organization are the same thing; that religion is the carrying on of meetings, guilds, clubs, lectures, boy scouts and girl guides, Church lads' brigades and boys' brigades, Sunday schools, parish outings, parish cricket or football, parish concerts, parish teas, but who seldom read and hardly ever think. Clergy in country parishes, some of them all too comfortable, many more of them desperately poor

and fearfully lonely, and many of all kinds who never really deepen their own lives, and therefore cannot deepen the lives of others. And then the Christians, men and women, who are not clergy. They do all kinds of good work ; but how they spoil it ! They spoil it by thinking that their own way of doing things must be the best. They spoil it by jealousies and squabbles, parochial jealousies and individual squabbles, parochial squabbles and individual jealousies. They make us think of Euodias and Syntyche, two Christian ladies at Philippi ; they were so well meaning ; but S. Paul had to beseech them to be at one mind with each other. And some of them spoil their work by trying outwardly to do religious things while inwardly their hearts are not right with God. There is an enormous amount of work going on in the Church ; but I think it is hardly an exaggeration to say that from God's point of view, from the point of view of spiritual effectiveness, nine-tenths of it are thrown away, useless and spoilt. What people do is so largely ruined by what they are.

S. Paul states clearly what captivity means. It means ' bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ' (2 Cor. x. 5). And the next words in the Psalm that we have

been studying carry us further. 'Thou hast led captivity captive, and *received gifts* among men.' When the thoughts are led captive the Christian's motive is transformed. Instead of wanting to be good enough—some people seem to want only to be just good enough—to go to Heaven, wanting to be good enough to preserve the good opinion of other Christians, wanting to be successful in our work, wanting people to think how nice, or how busy, or how invaluable we are, we shall long simply and solely for one thing—to *give* as much love as we can to the Christ who loves us. If He conquers us and carries us captive, He asks from us gifts, tribute, of every kind—money, time, brain, strength, zeal, work. It is a fearful thing to fall, as captives, into the hands of the living God, because He asks so much. But He knows that He will get everything if He can only get our love.

We are still thinking of the Church in general, before we come to our own spiritual needs. What is it that lies behind the widespread failure of Christians? We know that love is the one thing lacking; but we want to see why it is lacking. I think the reason is that to masses of Christians God is not *real*; He does

not appeal to them as the one, intense, immediate Reality. The ordinary, working ideas about God and religion which would be found in many minds, if they expressed themselves, would, I think, be something like this : God is the name of the very vague and undefined Authority that has power, chiefly over the next life. The Bible says, and therefore Christians hold, that He requires certain duties from us in this life which largely involve giving up things that we like. In practice we don't ask too minutely what He requires. But we feel that we ought to be reasonably honest and kind. (We can't, of course, carry these to extremes, or we should never get on in life at all ; but reasonably honest and kind.) We ought to be quite sober, and lead respectable lives. Some—a decreasing number—go further. We ought to go to Church fairly regularly, either on Sunday morning or Sunday evening, as suits our home arrangements or other arrangements best. We ought to say our prayers, which sometimes means the Lord's Prayer plus a little formula that we learnt as children. And we really like singing hymns of a certain type ; they make us for the moment feel good. We ought to give our children every chance, by

having them christened and sending them to Sunday School. If we are in a social grade in which children do not go to Sunday School, we assume that they have divinity lessons at school. Further, if they want to be confirmed, we won't stand in their way, just as our parents didn't stand in our way. But when we speak of giving them every chance, we mean, of course, every reasonable chance. We don't include setting them an example of deep and enthusiastic religious life, because we are not saints ; nothing will ever make us saints, and no one can expect it from us. Above all, the Holy Communion is suitable only for the really good people who can 'live up to it.' I do not think that that is a caricature of the religious ideas of a large percentage of poor and rich, kindheartedness and a sturdy moral respectability. Among the rich the kindheartedness is not always quite so noticeable, while the respectability is easier because the outward circumstances are more comfortable. Nothing can lead a man in Christ's train, and make him 'ascend' from morality to true religion, unless God becomes real to Him. That is the first of all prayers that we ought to offer for the Church and our country. It is only when 'Christians' become Christian

that the Psalmist's remaining words can prove true : ' Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts among men, yea the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.' Not only the passive, respectable, moral people, but the openly and actively rebellious will be drawn into captivity. It is when the Christian has offered his *Miserere* that he can say, ' Then shall I teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.'



#### IV. EVERY THOUGHT.

**S.** PAUL, as we have said, tells us what captivity means ; it means ' bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.' Imagine what life would be if we could get anywhere near that. Let us examine our thoughts. And first our thoughts about God. If we examine them some of us will find that we deserve the rebuke that God gives to the sinner in Psalm L. : ' Thou thoughtest that I am even such a one as thyself.' It is a temptation that comes to everyone to think that God must be like us, instead of remembering that He wants us to be like Him. For instance : it is very human to behave and speak nicely to a person of our own class, especially if he is rich, and perhaps even more if he has a title, and not so nicely to a servant or a labourer. And we are so apt to think that God regards people in the same way ; that we, with our privileges of culture and education, and all the safeguards of convention and public opinion, cannot go very

far wrong ; and that God likes us better than He likes the rough and uncultured and ignorant. We know, of course, all the time that it is not so ; that man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart. And yet in practice it is instinctive to many of us to let our outward appearance count for something, when there are deep, hidden failures of the heart, hidden, perhaps, even from ourselves, but well known to Him from whom no secrets are hid.

And the same thing from another point of view. S. Paul says, ' Be not deceived ; God is not mocked.' He uses here a peculiar word. It means to cheat or hoodwink a person, and then grin or laugh at him behind his back. It sounds terrible ; but if our thoughts are not in captivity we are tempted at times to do something like that. There are the deep, hidden failures, our spiritual pride, our insincerities, our lapses into anger or irritation, our lapses into untruthfulness, our lapses into self-indulgence, our little spitefulnesses against other people, our forgetfulness or carelessness about duties that seem small, or that are not likely to be noticed. What a list we could make of the sins that so easily beset us ! But instead of real penitence, we sometimes gloss them over by an abundance

of religious acts and busy work. We do really think of ourselves as good people, and treat God at times as though He could be hoodwinked, and could not see below the surface.

I hope the reader will not think I am being too hard. We must be hard with ourselves if we are to make progress. Our opportunities and privileges are so great ; and to whom much is given, from him shall much be required.

Here are two other ways in which we are apt to think that God is like ourselves. We all know that it is very human to let ourselves sometimes be persuaded against our better judgment. Of course there are many cases in which we are bound to hesitate, and feel that we may after all be wrong, and that we ought to follow another person's guidance. But I am speaking of the cases in which we are quite certain what is the right thing to do. And then we let ourselves be coaxed, or wheedled, or flattered, or be carried away by some other form of persuasion. And we think that God can be treated in the same way ; that His loving kindness is of the sort that allows us to persuade Him against His better judgment ; that we can somehow get Him to approve of things that we

know He doesn't approve of, because we want them so much. We persuade ourselves, for example, by excuses ; we are too tired to say our prayers properly, or we are too busy to read and meditate on our Bible, or we have so many things to think of that we cannot concentrate our minds to think of Him, or we are so something or other that we cannot do what we know He wants us to do. And because we persuade ourselves, we think we have managed to persuade Him to let us off the primary duties of life because there are so many secondary duties which claim our attention. God is not hard and exacting ; He knoweth whereof we are made, He remembereth that we are dust. But just for that very reason He knows, with a certainty which nothing can alter, that if we are to grow in holiness and in love to Him primary things must come first.

Once more. God in His mercy and wisdom allows every human life, to some extent, to contain trouble, sorrow, illness, pain, anxiety, disappointments, worries, bothers, regrets, heart-aches, unsatisfied longings, and many other shadows and discords. And because we often make mistakes, we sometimes think that God is such an one as ourselves ; that He makes

mistakes too. Because we like being happy, we find ourselves inclined to say, If God is a perfectly loving and powerful God, why did He not make a perfectly happy world? That is not our deepest and truest view. We know that God did not make us to be happy; He made us to be good. But we forget it in the stress of trial, and ask, Why should all this sorrow and pain be necessary? Why, in particular, should I be singled out for this long-drawn trouble, when so many other people's lives seem easy and happy and smooth? Surely it would have answered God's purposes just as well to have let me off this? Surely He has made a mistake? And we complain, and grumble, and murmur, and fret, and thereby fail to gain the one great blessing which was God's express purpose in giving us the privilege of being troubled. It is always an honour to be selected to do something difficult. The greater your trouble the greater your honour. You are singled out for the peculiar honour of enduring hardness, that you may please Him who hath enrolled you as His soldier. If our thoughts were really in captivity to the obedience of Christ, we should grasp and remember this, and we should set out not to try and escape the trouble, and not simply to endure

it because we can't escape it, feeling all the time injured and badly used, but to go right through it as the piece of work, above all others, that God has given us to do for His glory. God had to say to Israel, 'Your ways are not My ways, neither are My thoughts your thoughts.' But His thoughts *ought to be* our thoughts. That is what captivity means ; not treating Him as if He were like us, but making ourselves like Him.

We shall probably feel that we already have ample material for self-examination. But plenty more will offer itself if we go on to our thoughts about other people. Now here is a strange thing. While we are often tempted to think that God is like ourselves, we are still more frequently tempted to think that other people are unlike ourselves—that is to say, worse ; less capable, less attractive, less religious, less deserving. And when they get some of the good things of life that we like to get—success, thanks, appreciation, money, enjoyment—it is luck on their part, but merit on ours. We don't usually tell them of their faults; but we talk about their faults behind their backs, or think about them in our own minds. We criticize them, and run them down, or we are apt to give a turn to the conversation that leads

others to criticize them and run them down. And the sweetest drop in our cup is to hear them compared unfavourably with ourselves! We do not realise, till we think it out very carefully, how much we enjoy it. I have spoken of this elsewhere; but the matter is so important that it will bear repetition. Among all the faults of Christians there is probably none that is quite so widespread and deeply engrained as this. And not once in a thousand is it necessary for God's glory. Consider how very, very seldom you can say or think something to the disparagement of another person with your thoughts at the same moment really in captivity to the obedience of Christ. There are such times, it is true. There were times when Christ Himself did it. But if we could do it only when we were certain that it would bring glory to God, the inner life of Christians would be a wonderful thing. Charity—love—covereth the multitude of sins. It tries not even to think about them, much less to imagine them when they don't exist, or to magnify them unnecessarily when they do. Love thinketh no evil, because love means captivity to Christ.

And when we have examined our thoughts about God, and our thoughts about other people,

we shall find that we have to a large extent covered our thoughts about ourselves.

I would ask the reader to kneel down as soon as possible after finishing this chapter, and say, O Lord, I am not yet fully a captive ; I am a rebel asserting my own independence ; I am an enemy entrenched in my own wayward will. But I long to surrender ; I want Thee to carry me into captivity, and to triumph over me in Christ.



## V. GIFTS TO CHRIST.

**I**F we only let Him do it, the result will be the peace which the world cannot give. A Psalmist could cry 'All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto Thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him?' (Ps. xxxv. 10). Have you felt it? A warmth, a thrill, a gladness, that seems to go through the very bones? Something that makes you want to stop people in the street and say, Do you know what a wonderful thing it is to be the Lord's captive? 'Oh taste and see how gracious the Lord is.' 'Oh come hither and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.' 'I opened my mouth, and drew in my breath, for my delight was in Thy commandments.' 'He brought me out of darkness, out of the shadow of death, and brake my bonds asunder.' 'He brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the mire and clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and ordered my goings, and hath put a new song in my mouth, even a

thanksgiving unto our God.' 'Oh that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of men.' Take the Psalms, and pick out all the praises and thanksgivings in the whole hundred and fifty of them, and they will not be enough to express the joy of being the Lord's captive. It is so splendid.

But at the same time we must remember that the chief object of our captivity is not that we should get joy, but that He should get service ; it is not that we should get anything, but that He should get us. It is very human to be always wanting to get. It is natural and instinctive to feel that the whole world revolves round me. When I walk along the road, all the trees and houses move towards *me* ; the moon on the water always directs her ladder of light towards *me* ; every person with whom I come in contact contributes something to *me*. Even God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, lavish their work and compassion upon *me*. But with true love the movement is also the other way. I must, by the very nature of things, be the centre of my world. But I am the centre for the sole object of giving myself out in every direction in the whole circle. Every man,

woman, and child that I meet is someone sent into my circle to receive something from me. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Eternal Unity of Love, give themselves to me in order that I may give myself out to meet them. Love is nothing but self-giving on either side. So that if anyone says, 'I have never felt any rapturous joy in my religion ; I wish I could ; it would make life much easier '—he need not be troubled. If you are His captive—you must make quite sure about that—but if you are, your chief object must not be to get joy. Our Psalm tells us what your chief object ought to be. 'When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and *received gifts* among men.' The Conqueror, as we have said, demands tribute, large payments from His captives. His love cannot be satisfied till we meet His self-giving with a corresponding love.

Look, then, at one or two of the gifts that He wants. If we are captives we must say (taking the words in Ps. xxxi. 15, and putting our own meaning into them) 'My times are in Thy hand,' to dispose of as Thou wilt. Life would be transformed if we could make intensely and permanently real to ourselves the fact that each successive minute belongs to God and not to me.

We sometimes feel bothered and worried at the end of the day because we don't seem to have done anything. We may, of course, have wasted our time. But even when we haven't, the feeling is apt to come. Doesn't that sometimes mean, I should have liked the day to contain some important and interesting things, things that are a little showy, that people would talk about, or things that I really could do extremely well if I only had the chance ; but the whole day has been frittered away with little bits of routine that do no good to anyone ? If you have taken yourself out of captivity, it is very probable that the day *has* been wasted. But if you have been the Lord's captive, and you know that all these things were plain, undeniable duties given you by Him, you can encourage yourself with the thought that not one minute has been frittered away. Your time is part of the tribute that you have paid to the Conqueror, and He has used it as He saw best. 'Lo, I am come to do Thy will,' not to spend my time in ways in which I could gain enjoyment.

And we can say the same of interruptions. We are doing something interesting, or something that needs rather careful thought, or something that we have only just time to finish.

And the interruptions are exasperating ! It would be such a help if we could remember that what we call interruptions are really and merely *other duties* given us by God at the times that He sees best. Our times are in His hand, not ours.

After thinking of our time in general, we naturally turn to the chief ways in which it is spent. I don't mean the details of our work ; I want only to think of it from the point of view of the verse that we are studying. The ascended Conqueror must receive gifts from His captives. And our work is to be one of our principal gifts. Again, I don't mean only ' religious work,' but the work of every kind and description that belongs to our trade or profession. The oldest and holiest of us is only a little child in the sight of the Father in Heaven ; so we need not shrink from an illustration from childhood, which I am venturing to use, although I have elsewhere suggested something like it in another connexion. Here is a small child making a Christmas present for his father or mother. His hands and thoughts are busy for days beforehand. It will not be worth much, in its intrinsic value, when it is finished ; but that doesn't trouble him. He is simply bent

on making it as good as he can. But when it is finished, and the day has come, nearly the whole pleasure of it would be lost if he simply left it somewhere and heard afterwards that the parent had taken it. And the parent's pleasure would be lost too. The child wants to *give* it. He has been dwelling on that moment from the first. The act of giving it, and of receiving warm thanks for it, has been the inspiration of his work. And if we are as little children, that will be our inspiration too. We do our work, we preach, or teach, or visit, or heal, or write letters, or cast up ledgers, or toil with our hands, and so on ; and then at the end of the day we lose the full delight of our service by not offering it to our Father at our evening prayers, and on Sunday at the Holy Communion. (Of course if we have knowingly put anything wrong into our work, anything selfish or lazy or dishonest, it is ruined as an offering ; but we are thinking of those who really wish to be captives.) God does not want the labour of slaves, which He would take as a matter of course. He wants to receive gifts among men. He wants, like a loving father, to enjoy the great moment with His child when the gift is offered to Him. The intrinsic value of our work is very small ; but

that need not trouble us. He wants the love which will do the work in order to offer it as a gift.

And that brings us to our prayers, which are at least as great a gift as our work. Look back over the last few days. What have our prayers been like? Have we been, like eager children, steadily engaged in making them as worthy as possible as a present for our Father? We think of the times when our prayers have been little more than attempts to coax Him into giving us something, instead of spontaneous, whole-hearted expressions of love, intimate conversations, quiet listenings when He taught us lessons, and all the other things which make real prayer. We think of the times when we said words, but our hearts did not reach Him at all; we were not thinking, and not praying. For clergymen, who have to take services regularly, that is a quite peculiar and special danger. Or we think of the times when we did not even try to pray, though opportunities offered themselves; the long hours during the day when we could sometimes have recalled His presence and given Him some love: the long hours when we treated Him simply as if He wasn't there. And so, when we offer Him

our prayers we have very few to bring Him, and poor ones at that.

And part—a large part—of our prayers must be intercession for others. There is nothing new to say about this ; but it needs to be pressed as earnestly as words can do it, that without intercession our gift of prayer is hopelessly incomplete. Prayers for those whom we know and love, prayers for those whom we know and find it very difficult to love, and prayers for the millions whom we do not know but whom we ought to love because Christ loves them. We need not worry ourselves as to how much ‘ result ’ our prayers will bring about ; we cannot calculate or guess that. We only know that if any single real prayer ever has the slightest result, then every real prayer must have it, somehow and somewhere. If my prayers for my own family, for instance, are of any use, then my prayers for the whole human family must also be of use.

The only thing that we need trouble about is, how much value, in God’s sight, we can put into the gift of prayer that we want to offer to Him, the gift that the ascended Conqueror wants to receive from those whom He has carried captive.



Once more. To our work and prayers must be added our recreations—cricket, football, golf, tennis, billiards, bridge, or any other game, hobby, or amusement with which we occupy our leisure. God has given us 'all things richly to enjoy,' but to enjoy in such a way, at such times, to such extent, and with such people, as will make it possible for us to bring the enjoyment to Him afterwards, and offer it as a gift. That is the only satisfactory test as to whether, for each individual Christian, an enjoyment is right or wrong. It can be a guide and a safeguard. And if he is in captivity, the limitations which it imposes will not lessen but will multiply the enjoyment.

## VI. GIFTS FROM CHRIST.

**W**E need never shrink from picturing an unreachable ideal. None of us reach it ; our captivity is not complete. But it is nevertheless real, if the ideal is that towards which we are deliberately and earnestly striving. 'Thou *hast* led captivity captive' is a joyful statement of actual fact. If from the day of the Ascension until now Christ had never led captive any band of captives, we might well be pessimistic as to His power to do so in our own case. The glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the white-robed army of martyrs, and the real Christians in the holy Church throughout all the world and in all ages, have followed in His train. And they enter into yet completer captivity when they pass into the fuller life. It is good to think of the faithful departed as the soldiers whose time of active service has expired, while we are the small expeditionary force in a foreign country in contact with the enemy ; and they are looking to the Church

militant here on earth to uphold the honour of our heavenly King and Country.

But our verse has yet more meaning for us. We have been studying it in its original form, found in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and rightly translated in the Authorised and Revised Versions—‘Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts among men.’ But in the Prayer Book Version we read, ‘and received gifts *for* men,’ which gives quite a different turn to the words. The same thought appears in the form in which S. Paul quotes the verse in Eph. iv. 8: ‘When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and *gave gifts unto* men.’ This interpretation is found in the Targum, or Aramaic paraphrase, of the Psalms, which, in its present form, is later than S. Paul; but it was probably current in Jewish circles at an earlier date, and was known to the apostle, who adopted it because it was better suited to his purpose.

What are the gifts which the ascended Christ gives to the world? The answer, which is twofold, will occupy us in this and the next two chapters. We think first of the greatest gift which the world has ever received. Love is always a give-and-take. If God wants us to

give ourselves as a gift to Him, it is because He has Himself come as a gift to us. 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.' 'My Father giveth you the true Bread from Heaven.' 'He gave Him to be Head over all to the Church.' But Christ is God. When God the Son became Man it was not because His Will assented or submitted to the Will of the Father; the Will of the divine Trinity in Unity is *one* Will. The greatest gift that the world has ever received is God's gift of Himself.

But from that springs a further thought. Christ says to the Father, 'As Thou didst send Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world' (S. John xvii. 18). And He says to the disciples, 'As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you' (xx. 21). Herein is a marvellous thing. He gave gifts unto men by sending into the world the Christians whom He has led captive. That is what He does with them when He has triumphed over them. That is what is involved in the truth of the Incarnation. The Church is the extension, the continuation, the development of the Incarnation. In Christ 'dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, *bodily*' (Col. ii. 9); and that word must include the truth of His indwelling

in the Church, His Body. 'Of His fulness have we all received' (S. John i. 16). 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal. ii. 20). Any Christian who has been carried captive can say with S. Paul, 'it pleased God to reveal His Son in me' (Gal. i. 16). Other people can 'glorify God in me' (*v.* 24). In two passages S. Paul enlarges upon this thought in detail.

Eph. iv. 11, 12. 'He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, in order to equip the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the Body of Christ.' This follows almost immediately upon the verse from our Psalm which he quotes in *v.* 8, and is intended to be an explicit application of the words 'gave gifts unto men.' The apostles in their official capacity are represented by the episcopate; but the word in itself, as everyone knows, means simply 'one who is sent'; and we can all take that for ourselves. Anyone can be sent. And in any kind of work that we try to do for the building up of the Body of Christ there are few things that we need more than the vivid sense of commission. In giving Himself as a gift to the world, Christ also gives *us* in union with Him; and we can therefore dare

to adopt His language : ' My food is to do the will of Him that sent me ' ; ' the words that I speak are not mine, but the Father's which sent me ' ; ' if I honour myself, my honour is nothing; it is my Father that honoureth me '—by giving me the privilege of being sent, in union with Christ. The humility that we need in our high work we can get, if we burn deep into our hearts the simple fact that we are sent.

If the word ' apostles ' points to our commission, the next word ' prophets ' points to our inspiration. S. Paul was writing of Christian prophets, who often spoke in unconscious or half-conscious ecstasy, with which he deals in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. In doing our work we are in no need of the ecstasy—S. Paul himself did not attach any fundamental importance to it—but we *must* have the inspiration. We must be so taught of God that our message will have all the force which the old Hebrew prophets used to put into their claim, ' Thus saith the Lord.' If preachers were, not ecstatic but, inspired, sermons would cease to be—what they so often are—dead discourses in which, as George Herbert said, ' God takes the text and preaches patience.'

The work of an ' evangelist ' is to tell to the

world the Gospel story. The world will not read it in print, but it must be given the chance of knowing it. Evangelists to-day have to take the place of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; in other words, they must, by the divine miracle of the Holy Spirit working within them, put before the eyes of men a living portrait of Jesus Christ in His complete Humanity expressing in unclouded perfection His complete Divinity. The four Gospels are miracles just because they do this. We are to tell the facts, and exhibit the character, with such inspiration that men and women and little children will catch glimpses of Jesus that will make them love and worship Him. Sermons on the virtues of the Christian life are common enough; but sermons on the Man who lived the perfect life are rarer than they ought to be. The clergy often assume that congregations know the Gospels, and they turn to the Epistles as giving more material for the working out of sermons. But congregations, to a large extent, do not know the Gospels. And the living Man Jesus Christ has far more drawing power than the moral teaching and the theology of the Epistles. When we 'preach the Gospel' we must not confine ourselves to preachingsalvation

through the death of Christ. That indeed, with the Resurrection, is the climax of the Gospel. But the whole Gospel story—it is a truism that is sometimes forgotten—is the whole story related in the gospels.

And Christ has sent ‘pastors’ as one of His gifts to men, to feed the flock of God ; not only putting before them the portrait of Him who is the Bread of life, but drawing them to feed on Him, and rightly and duly administering His holy Sacraments.

These first four words apply primarily to the clergy. But we now come to a much wider term ; a great number of Christians are ‘teachers.’ It covers the whole of education, which ought to include the work of parents and of all who have the care of children or of the unlearned. And apart from this, everyone has opportunities of teaching by conversation or letters. (May I say in passing that letters are often worth taking great trouble over. How much we should have missed if S. Paul had not put the whole force of his Christianity into his letters ! You may sometimes miss a divinely given opportunity by a letter that is slipshod or hurried. To write a letter carefully can often be an act of divine service.) What, then, is your



teaching like? Remember our tremendous function: 'It pleased God to reveal His Son in me.' And think of the description of Christ which was given by Nicodemus, 'We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God' (S. John iii. 2). You are God's gift to the world; you have 'come from God'; sent as Christ was sent. Is that the impression which your teaching gives? There are three passages, all rather similar, which shew how a good teacher is made. Our Lord said, 'We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen' (S. John iii. 11). S. Peter said, 'We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard' (Acts iv. 20). S. John said, 'That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you' (1 John i. 3). You will never make good teachers if you merely repeat other people's words out of books, even out of the Bible. You must yourself see and hear in your own heart and understanding what you want to teach. You must teach out of your own experience; you must pour your own self into others. That is why so much of the religious 'teaching' given in our class rooms and pulpits is not teaching at all. If you are to pour something into others, you must first make it your own. Fresh water does not mean water of a

new and different kind, such as no one has ever tasted before ; it means water freshly sprung from the fountain. And if your teaching is to be fresh and original, it will not be something novel, such as no one has ever heard before, but something which you have drawn fresh from the Fountain and Origin of all truth by prayer and thought and study and spiritual experience. Teachers, who are teachers indeed, are among the most valuable gifts from Christ to the world.

## VII.

### VII. HELPS AND PILOTS.

THESE five—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers—do not exhaust the gifts in Christ's treasury. They are only specimens ; and we can think of many more for ourselves. But I want to select two from a somewhat similar list in an earlier passage, 1 Cor. xii. 28. In vv. 14-27 S. Paul draws his well-known picture of the Body, kept alive by the indwelling Spirit, and its many members, each with its particular function allotted to it by the same Spirit, all quite indispensable, however lowly they may seem to be, and all entrusted with the duty and privilege of manifesting the Spirit—exhibiting the Life that is in them—in their several ways for the good of the whole Body. And then comes the list, giving a few examples of various types of functions.

One of these is 'Helps.' It is not a very common word in Greek, though the corresponding verb occurs in a few passages. It denotes, according to its derivation, the laying

hold of a weight or burden that someone else is carrying, in order to help him along with it. It is not the action of a superior person who graciously assists an inferior. It is simply, as we say, 'to lend a hand.' And that is a function which devolves upon every Christian who is in captivity—every single one without exception, including children as soon as they are old enough to think at all. Parents cannot do a nobler service to their children than to teach them, from their earliest days, to be helpful. A nice-minded child loves to help. It adds a dignity to life that nothing else can give, and at the same time tends to preserve him from the self-centredness which is the bane of numberless lives. If a small child is allowed to feel that the whole household revolves round him, and then when he grows a little older this revolving becomes less and less noticeable, his instinct is to try, in various childish and sometimes disagreeable ways to assert himself, often coupled with an undefined feeling that he is being badly used. The impulse of the secondary consciousness to satisfy unfulfilled desires is well known in child psychology. And it is difficult to say which produces the worse results, spoiling or undue repression. But both can be obviated if

children are carefully and lovingly taught to be ' helps.'

And grown-ups are often in sore need of the same teaching. It is not difficult to picture, let us say, a middle-aged woman, unmarried, or perhaps married but with no children, fairly well-to-do, with literally no occupation in life but to make herself comfortable. She potters about, and kills time, and amuses herself. But five minutes with her are enough to shew that she is a stranger to happiness. Her letters to her friends are seldom without mention of her interminable ailments or misfortunes, and suggestions, in a slightly injured tone, that they don't write to her as often as they might. She was never taught as a child to be helpful ; or if she was, she has forgotten it. Self fills her entire horizon—the surface, conscious self, which never yet made anyone happy. And all the time her deeper self, unknown to consciousness, is kicking and chafing at the bars, struggling in vain for the satisfaction of unfulfilled desires. The pathos of it ! And all would be mended, at one stroke, as by a divine miracle, if she would give out her self to others, if she would allow herself to be led captive by the ascended Christ, and given back by Him to

the world as a 'help'—not with an occasional spasmodic effort to satisfy conscience, but as a settled habit of life induced by love to Him who said, 'I am among you as He that serveth.'

But there are those who would like to help, only they so often want to do it in ways of their own choosing. However naturally kind-hearted Simon the Cyrenian may have been, <sup>with me a y. he</sup> ~~I am~~ sure it was not the way of his own choosing when he helped our Lord by walking behind Him and lending a hand with the Cross. Are you prepared to do the same? In any troublesome, humdrum, or 'unimportant' duty to remain in the background and to help? Religious workers must often feel the temptation to spend time and trouble chiefly on those who are likely in some way to do them credit; or to pay more attention to those parts of their work which other people can see and appreciate, and less to those parts which are known only to God. Teachers, similarly, will often devote most of their energies to helping forward the promising pupils, whose successes will figure in the school reports, while they do their minimum of duty to the dull and ignorant ones, who may very likely be trying very hard but with poor results. But S. Paul used his word 'help' when he said to the elders

of Miletus, ' In all things I gave you an example, how that by so labouring ye ought to help the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive ' (Acts xx. 35). It is more blessed to give a helping hand to the weak, it is more blessed to spend time and trouble on the bad, ignorant, thankless, disobedient, troublesome, than to receive any amount of praise or pleasure or success.

And some readers of these pages may have other workers set over them. Are you tempted to put yourself forward, to air your views, to think that your way of doing things is the best ? Possibly it is the best ; but it is not always, in God's sight, the best thing for you to say so. The best thing in His sight is a humble obedience and a readiness to help.

There are two passages which shew us how glorious this word ' help ' really is. ' He remembering His mercy, hath helped His servant Israel ' (S. Luke i. 54). God Himself took upon Him the form of a slave to lend a helping hand. And ' in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities ' (Rom. viii. 26). It is the Divine example of helping the weak. You cannot want any higher work than that which

is done by God the Father in the Incarnate Christ, and by God the Holy Spirit.

Lastly, after 'helps,' S. Paul writes a word which our English versions translate 'governments,' which applies to all who are in positions of authority or responsibility. It does not, however, strictly mean 'governments.' The margin of the Revised Version renders it 'wise counsels': but that, again, is not its strict meaning. S. James iii. 4 gives us a hint: 'Behold also the ships which . . . are turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.' The 'governor' means the 'pilot,' or 'steersman,' as the Revised Version has it. And S. Paul means the same: delicate steering, tactful handling, guidance by a strong and sanctified common sense. It needs sympathy, the power to put yourself in another person's place, and to understand what he or she feels about things. It needs wisdom, gained by asking of God, who giveth to all liberally. It needs power over yourself so as not to be impulsive, or obstinate, or dictatorial, or jealous, or touchy; or, on the other hand, weak and vacillating. And whether we are in a position of authority or not, we all have some steering to do. There is the great and wide sea



of life, and there go the ships, the numberless individual lives, every one of them with the possibility of shipwreck ahead. And we are to help to steer them, so that Christ may bring them unto the haven where they would be.

The reader will not mind my suggesting that he should go through the last two chapters again, and—on his knees if possible—test himself by the seven words that we have studied, and ask God, by a fresh outpouring of His Holy Spirit, to make him more useful than he has ever been before, as one of Christ's 'gifts unto men.'

## VIII. GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

**B**UT another and distinct meaning, which is more usually attached to S. Paul's words, remains to be noticed. Gifts or *charismata* are everything supplied by God to the bodies and souls of His children to enable them to fulfil their functions in the Body of Christ. To discuss these in detail would be a long task. We can look at them only quite generally and briefly. Our thoughts can begin by moving along a line parallel to that which we followed in Chapter VI. As the Father sent the Son, so the Son sends us. We are a gift to the world, in union with the Father's gift of the Son and the Son's gift of Himself. But then we read such words as these: 'I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete' (S. John xiv. 16); 'the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name' (v. 26); 'when the Paraclete is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father' (xv. 26); 'if I go not away, the Paraclete will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you' (xvi. 7). As soon as He went away, and ascended up on high, the Holy Spirit was the Gift unto men, proceeding from the Father and

the Son. But God's design is that the Holy Spirit and the Christian should be one. If we are in union with Him, and in proportion as we are in union with Him, all the *charismata* of the Spirit that we need each for our special function are ours. If the Church is the extension of the Incarnation, it is the instrument for exhibiting, manifesting, the indwelling Spirit of the Incarnate. So we turn back to 1 Cor. xii., which yielded us the two words that we studied in Chapter VII. Before speaking of the Body and its members, S. Paul says (vv. 4-7), 'Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and yet the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, and yet the same God who worketh all in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal' (*i.e.* for the advantage of the whole). And after his list of gifts he adds, 'But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, distributing to each one severally as He wills' (v. 11).

And Christians are very different from each other. By the mysterious power of God's creation every soul and body throughout all time is unique. And each is to be an instrument to manifest, in its own particular way, the one

and the same Spirit. The Church may be compared with a rich garden of flowers, in which every conceivable colour and shade of colour is to be found. The differences of colour are due to differences in the surface and texture of the several objects. A gentian or a violet is not a blemish in the picture because it is not crimson as a peony or white as a lily. But God distributes colour to each flower and leaf severally as He wills. It is because they forget this obvious truth that many Christians allow themselves to feel worried or jealous because they are so different from So-and-So. God wills that you should have your particular soul and body, and live in your particular surroundings and circumstances ; and they and no others determine the ways in which He wants you to manifest the Spirit ; not in spite of them, but by means of them. In Eph. iii. 10 S. Paul says, ' that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known (exhibited, manifested) through the Church the manifold wisdom of God,' where the word translated ' manifold ' means literally ' variegated,' ' many-coloured.' And the thought is echoed in the description in Rev. xxi. of the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem. The city is the Church in the perfection

for which it is destined ; and it is a Church of many colours. ‘ The first foundation was jasper ; the second, sapphire ; the third, chalcedony ’ ; and so on through all the lustrous twelve. And the colours flame out their beauty because they are lit with the light of God : ‘ the city hath no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb.’ Differences in characters and capabilities and temperaments and circumstances are part of the very beauty of the Church. Only one thing is absolutely necessary ; they must be lit with the light of God. The Holy Spirit must lighten them with celestial fire. Only one thing will ruin the beauty, and that is to be in the dark, to shut out from our life the radiance of the Holy Spirit by sin. Moreover the differences in Christians form, according to the plan of the divine Architect, a definite pattern ; and the pattern cannot be complete so long as one precious stone is in the dark, so that the divine light cannot produce in it its rightful colour in its rightful place. That is the primary motive of the whole work of the Church in trying to win souls for Christ’s captivity throughout the world. And it should be the primary motive of our own spiritual life.

It is not a mere weary struggle against sin ; it is not a calculated effort to satisfy God enough to gain entrance to Heaven ; above all it is not a self-satisfied piety. The glory of the Holy Trinity in Unity is in us, and we in Him, and each of us with our different colours is to be luminous by His light, in order to complete the many-coloured city.

But that means that we must yield ourselves to His shining. Or, to return to our former metaphor, we must offer ourselves as gifts to Him. Only so can He fill us with His spiritual gifts, and send us as His gifts to the world.

There is a beautiful type of this in one of the ceremonies of Jewish sacrifice. It is called the wave-offering. The priest held the offering in his hands and waved or moved it, not from side to side, but towards the altar and back again. It symbolizes the offering of ourselves, first held out, presented, given to God to be consecrated, illumined, filled, inspired with His shining and His gifts, and then given back by Him for use among men.

‘Lord, take me, with all that that taking involves, that Thou mayest give me back to the world filled with Thy gifts.’

## IX. GO AND PREPARE.

**B**UT if He does so, what is the work that He gives us to do? It is to the nature of our work for Him that we must next turn our attention. A well-known incident in S. Luke xxii. 8-13 will serve as a parable on which to build up our thoughts. The day before the terrible night on which our Lord was betrayed 'He sent Peter and John saying, Go and prepare for us the Passover that we may eat.' *Go and prepare.* That can be our text. Earlier in His ministry He did the same. He appointed seventy, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place whither He Himself was about to come (x. 1). And in the previous chapter we read that when He was starting on His journey to Jerusalem He sent messengers before His face, and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to prepare for Him (ix. 52). Earlier still, God sent John the Baptist; and Zachariah said of him, 'Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways' (i. 76). And five

centuries before that, a prophet proclaimed, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord' (Is. xl. 3). And in the collect for the third Sunday in Advent we say, 'Grant that the ministers and stewards of Thy mysteries may likewise so prepare and make ready Thy way.' *Go and prepare.* That is the work of every prophet and every preacher, but also of every disciple of the Lord, which means every man, woman, and child who is in captivity, and is sent as a gift unto men.

When a fixed idea has got into a person's head, we know how hard it is to get it out. And if an idea has got into several million heads, it is several million times harder to get it out. Now a fixed idea has got into the heads of several millions of people that the primary object of being religious is to get some advantage for one's own soul. Many of the most ignorant of them imagine that the advantage is hardly going to begin before they die. Religion is an investment, a speculation for the far, dim future. Be good and pious now, that you may have a reward at some remote date when you go to Heaven. And we know that to countless persons who hold this idea the speculation doesn't



appeal. Heaven is too far off both in time and place, too vague and unattractive ; they prefer smaller profits and quick returns. Or, if they think about Heaven at all, they assume that, in the end, God will never really shut them out. So that they can get the best of both worlds without much trouble.

But beside people of that sort, even quite good, pious men and women sometimes find it hard to escape from the notion that the chief object of religion is to ensure the safety of their souls, and to get forgiveness and peace and goodness and joy. But the least moment of thought will shew us the truth, that Christ cannot be satisfied until He has led captive all the hearts in the world, and therefore that the object of the religion of every Christian is necessarily to gain for Him all the hearts in the world. He must, of course, carry my heart captive before I can do anything for Him. My entrance into His service must come first,—first in time, but not first in importance. The life of all mankind is much more important than my one little individual life, and therefore to gain other people for Christ is much more important than to gain anything for myself. S. Paul understood that well. He declared that he would have been

willing to be anathema—accursed—if it had been possible by losing his own soul to save the souls of his people (Rom. ix. 3). The thing is so obvious that one would think it needed only to be mentioned for everyone to grasp the truth and to act upon it. But our ingrained individualism, the towering position occupied by Self, makes men blind to what is obvious. They will go on through their one little life on earth, content with being decently good, and averagely pious, convinced that God is satisfied with them if they save their own souls without trying to do anything for the souls of other people. But why do we belong to a Church at all? Why are we members of a society, if our own soul is all that we have to think about? A society is formed because if men act in union they can get something done which could not be done if they acted by themselves. That is, in theory at least, the object of every society on earth. And it is the object—the sole object—of the Church; not for each person who professes to belong to it to save his own soul, but in combination, in oneness of purpose, by mutual help and fellowship, as one Body living one life and breathing one Spirit, to bring to Christ and make true members of His Body all the souls in

the world for His satisfaction and His glory. If we are Christians, that is to say, if Christ has carried us captive—and the word 'Christian' has no active meaning until that happens—He says to us, Now that I am in possession, do not think that that is all. That is only the very beginning. The reason why I have captured you is that I need you. Go and prepare the way for My coming into other hearts. If you fail to do that, you are wasting My salvation ; you are wasting Me ; you are squandering upon yourself the spiritual wealth given you to hand on to others. That wealth is of such a kind that you cannot keep it hidden under a bushel or in a napkin without gradually but surely losing it. Give out to others the divine that is in you, or it will go out, and leave you worse than if it had never come in, empty, desolate, and dead.

What, then, does He mean when He says, Go and prepare? What have we got to do? When we try to answer that question, we are up against the tremendous fact that man possesses freedom of will. If, when Christ knocks, a heart does not unlock its door voluntarily to let Him in, He will never get in at all. He will not force men to yield themselves to

Him and love Him, because forced love is not love. What He does, and the only thing that He can do, is to shew them Himself. He whose love is deeper and more yearning than the love of a mother, He whose love is hotter than fire, He whose love is stronger than death, a love that many waters cannot quench nor the floods drown, He who is altogether lovely, stands before the world and says, Behold Me, behold Me ; behold I stand at the door and knock ; behold the Man who died for you. Can you keep Me out ? Can you refuse to surrender yourselves to My captivity ? Can you go on in your selfishness, and self-indulgence, and self-will, and sin ? And yet millions do keep Him out and refuse to surrender themselves to follow in His train ; they still go on in their sin and worldliness, and their dead, blank indifference to everything that has to do with Him. To anyone who has caught the least vision of His beauty it seems inconceivable. But when we think about it, we get an explanation so terrible that we hardly dare face it in its shameful reality. The beauty of Christ is hidden from the eyes of men by the ugliness of Christians. Christians are the only shape in which the world can see Christ. The Christian professes to have opened his heart to

Christ, so that Christ dwells in him, and speaks in him, and acts in him, and shines in him, and loves in him. To call ourselves Christians means to proclaim to the world, I am in Christ, and Christ in me ; I have given myself up to His captivity, yielding every thought to His obedience ; I have been immersed in His Spirit ; I have thrown myself body and soul into His plans and purposes and wishes ; I am working in the partnership of a living union with Him, and want what He wants, and hate what He hates, and love what He loves. So that if the world is to see His beauty and strength and perfect obedience and self-discipline and self-sacrifice and purity and truth, it ought to be able to see them all in me. And it doesn't. Christ tells me to go and prepare the way before Him by shewing men and women what He is like ; and all that I succeed in doing is to shew them what I am like, which is horribly different. When workers for God fail to lead souls nearer to Christ and Him crucified, it is mostly because though they preach and talk about Him they do not shew in themselves the print of the nails. Parents and school teachers teach children that they ought to be good, they teach them to say their prayers, and take them to Church, and

make them learn Scripture and Prayer Book and Catechism. And the children, though they don't think it out explicitly, live on the underlying assumption that the result of it all will be—and is intended to be—to make them the same kind of persons as those who have taught them. And that is precisely what happens. The disciple is not above his teacher. Not one of us—we cannot remember the fact too often—not one of us can draw a single soul nearer to Christ than we are ourselves, because the only way that we have of drawing them is to shew them His beauty. And if we don't do that by our own exhibition of Him, we can talk about His beauty as much as we like, but we shall succeed only in giving them a false idea of Him. Some of the most despicable figures in the story of our Lord's Passion are the false witnesses put up to give an untrue account of Him. As Mr. Chesterton truly says, 'Christianity has not been tried and found wanting ; it has been found difficult and not tried.' When it is said that Christianity has failed, it means that Christians have failed.

Let us burn this fact into our souls ; burn it in so that it hurts. Penitence is not sentiment. It is possible to be overwhelmed with penitence

without shedding a single tear, or making audible a single sigh. It is a real, stern self-accusation, a real longing for God's divine absolution, a real and eager determination to grow, with His help, more able to go and prepare other hearts for Christ's captivity by giving them a truer picture of what He is.

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## X. PETER AND JOHN.

**W**HEN a man takes a commission in the army, the king commits something into his keeping. The king represents the honour and prestige of the whole nation ; and the officer is sent to represent him ; he commits the honour and prestige to him in the performance of the little piece of work allotted to him. And the King of kings has given us a commission ; He has committed His own honour into our keeping. ' As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.' And the more we realise the greatness of this fact the deeper will be the shame that we shall feel at our failure. But whenever the Lord sees anyone on his knees in penitence, He comes to him at once, as He came by His angel to Daniel, and says, ' O man, greatly beloved, be strong, yea be strong.' Penitence brings not only forgiveness but also comfort, encouragement, and inspiration.

In the story that we are using as a parable ' Jesus sent Peter and John.' He knows perfectly well how unfit we are, and yet He sends us. He knew perfectly well what an



enormous amount of growth and improvement the disciples would need before they could be His witnesses to the world ; and yet long before He gave them their commission He said, ' Ye are the light of the world ' ; ' ye are the salt of the earth ' ; ' I will make you fishers of men.' His hopefulness was wonderful, because He had the love which ' believeth all things.' He knew what they were capable of becoming. It lifts us up upon our feet again, as it lifted Daniel, to hear Him say, ' O man, greatly beloved, be strong, yea, be strong.' ' If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things.' He knows what we can be and do if we only set to work humbly in His strength.

Think, then, of the two whom He sent, Peter and John. We generally think of them as they afterwards became, when the great inspiration had flooded their lives and they were transformed into apostles and spiritual heroes. We picture them with a halo round their heads. But go back to the time when they had no halo, when they were fishermen, rough and primitive, with no sort of education except what they could pick up at the local synagogue. Well-meaning sort of fellows, no doubt. But to call them ' the light of the world ' and ' the salt of

the earth' ! It sounds like gross exaggeration. And yet our Lord knew that nothing can exaggerate the transforming, uplifting power of the Holy Spirit. But it becomes increasingly wonderful when we think about the two messengers in detail.

Take S. Peter first. We know his faults so well that it might seem a graceless task to dwell on them ; but we are doing so only to think out our own. Our Lord had just said that He must go to Jerusalem and be killed. And S. Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him : Not a bit of it ; don't say such dreadful things. Why, you are the Messiah ; You have just told me that God has revealed to me the truth. The idea of the Messiah being killed ! He had had his head a little turned by the warm words which our Lord had just before spoken to him ; and he had so high an opinion of himself that he thought he knew better than his Master. And later on, when Jesus was washing the disciples' feet, and it came to S. Peter's turn, he cried, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.' Again he thought he knew better.

Is there one of us who is in no need of S. Paul's warning, 'I say to every man that is among you'—and that meant every woman too—'not

to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ' ? Religious people especially are in peculiar danger from this temptation. And coupled with it there always goes another, the desire that other people should think well of us. When the slave girl in the high priest's house said, ' Thou art also one of this man's disciples,' and the fisherman who was afterwards to be an apostle cursed and swore and lied, it was not, I think, from fear of his life. No one wanted to kill anybody but Jesus. If they had wanted to kill the disciples too, they would have run after them in the garden and caught them all. Even when he smote the high priest's servant no attempt was made to arrest him. And while he was warming himself at the fire, and one person after another sneered at him for being a companion of the Prisoner, they would not have listened for one moment to his angry denials if they had had the slightest wish to kill him. What, then, made him curse and swear and lie ? It was simply that he did not like all the people round to think badly of him. (Swearing was a very common Jewish practice ; and fishermen would hardly be more careful of their language than other people. I am sure they very soon got the better of it when they

became our Lord's followers, and lived daily in His presence. But at a moment when S. Peter was completely off his guard, the old habit cropped up again.) And some time afterwards, when he refused to take a meal with some Gentiles, though God had taught him by his vision, and visit to Cornelius, that he was to make no difference between Gentile and Jew, it was again simply the fear that his Jewish friends would think badly of him.

I think it is very probable that some readers, at this point, will say in their hearts, That is just where I fail. I could—I know I could—live a far more spiritual life if it were not for what people at home, people at my office, people who live and work with me, would think. I do so want to be thought well of ; I do so dread to be sneered at or looked down upon ; I am so dreadfully inclined to do things simply because other people do them, and to be afraid of doing things because other people don't ; I am so horribly nervous of other people's opinion. Pride and Fear,—a high opinion of myself, and a shrinking from my relations and acquaintances having a low opinion of me. Oh if I could only get rid of them ! If I could only be really humble and really brave ! When S. Peter

went out and wept bitterly, and all through the hours of anguish till Easter morning, that was probably one of his thoughts. It is not surprising that long afterwards, when the Holy Spirit had made a new man of him, he could write in his epistle about both aspects of this old failing of his. On the one hand he says, 'Let every one of you be girded with humility' (1 Pet. v. 5), as our Lord had humbly girded Himself with a towel in that scene on His last night on earth, which S. Peter could never forget. And on the other hand, 'Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye. And fear not their fear, neither be troubled; but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord' (iii. 13, 14). By that time he had become, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, both humble and brave. And we can become the same, by the same Spirit.

And then S. John. The halo with which we invest him is perhaps even brighter and lovelier than S. Peter's. But at first? What was he like in the old days before the river of Pentecostal inspiration surged over his soul? What picture is given us in the Gospels of a striking feature in his character? It is one that goes

home to many. With all his love for our Lord he was a man with a hot, quick temper. We have one bad instance of it. When the Samaritans refused to give Jesus and the Twelve a lodging on the way to Jerusalem (Samaritans generally would refuse to take in a party of Jews for the night ; Jews, in going South, usually avoided their territory, and went round on the East of the Jordan), S. John burst out in a fit of ungovernable rage, and asked our Lord to bring down fire from heaven—to bring a murderous flash of lightning—to scorch and shrivel up the whole village. And if he lost his temper once as badly as that, I am sure that it cannot have been the only time that he lost it. A man must have a very quick temper to come out with that sort of thing. That is not the kind of man, we say, that is likely to do much in preparing the way of Christ to come to the hearts of men. And that is quite true. A hot temper, a natural irritability, that is not kept in control does go far to ruin a Christian's influence. It may be over in a moment ; so is a flash of lightning ; but the harm is done, and sometimes it is harm that can never be put right in this world. In any case it must do some harm. If you have lost your temper, for example, with

someone, or in sight or hearing of someone, who has not yet given himself into Christ's captivity, you have lost a great part of your influence with him. And it doesn't need a great outburst of anger ; any sign of heat or irritation can do the mischief. And when we have once impaired our influence over someone in this way, it is well nigh impossible fully to regain it, unless we can shew, by a long course of self-restraint and humility that the Holy Spirit is gradually re-creating us. If he sees that, there is a chance of his learning that the power of the Holy Spirit is something real, something that works. And in that case we may be used, in spite of our former failing, to prepare the way of Christ to his heart. But what if we have lost influence over someone by some lack of restraint, and then our lives have moved apart, and we have never seen him or her again ? All that is left to us is to pray in penitence that God may do, by means of some other influences, what we failed to do. The deepest notes of sorrow that can sound in all our penitence are those called forth by the thought of our lost chances. What I might have done for the souls of others if only I hadn't done this, or forgotten that, or spoken or looked

in such a way ; if only I had arrived a little nearer to true freedom from the chains of Self, the freedom of Christ's captivity. Lives allowed to drift when we might have stopped them from drifting ; characters that were slipping downwards, and we only pushed them downhill a little more quickly when we might have given them a hand to lift them up.

How different all this is from our usual idea of S. John only shews what great things the Holy Spirit afterwards did for him. Love can even rebuke a lightning temper, saying Peace, be still, and there is a great calm.

After looking at S. Peter and S. John separately, we remember an occasion on which they sinned together. The Master with whom they had lived for months, whom they both loved, really, deeply, passionately, was in the sorest need of human sympathy and fellowship. In Gethsemane He asked them to keep awake and pray with Him ; and they went fast asleep. And He asks it still. He is still suffering in the sorrows and sins of men. And instead of finding us awake and praying, He often finds us with our hearts fast asleep. Sometimes, indeed, He finds our bodies fast asleep in bed, or luxuriously comfortable in an armchair, at times when we

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know we ought to be praying. Every time that that happens, it is a repetition of Gethsemane. 'What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?' And we remember occasions on which He had to say to us, 'Could ye not watch with Me five minutes?' And then the inevitable happens. When the Master was arrested, all the disciples forsook Him and fled. A temptation of one sort or another comes to us to be untrue to Him, in action, or more often in word, or most often in thought. We have not been in close enough touch with Him, and therefore we fall. Other people have no idea, we ourselves cannot remember, He alone knows how often we have all forsaken Him and fled.

And yet, in spite of everything, that which happened to the two apostles can happen to us. If we are enthusiastic, as they were, if our love is real and our penitence is deep, and if we are keeping ourselves daily and hourly in the bracing air of the Holy Spirit, all our saddest faults will not prevent Him from making us gradually more capable of presenting Him before the eyes of men, and drawing them into His captivity.

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## XI. WHERE ?

WE can now move a step forward in our parable. The two disciples asked the natural question, 'Where wilt Thou that we prepare?' Their question and the Lord's answer have a lesson for us. He did not tell them exactly to what house they were to go. What He said was, 'There shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water ; follow him into the house where he entereth in.' In other words He said, I will not give you a precise answer ; you must be guided by circumstances. And when we are told to go and prepare the way of the Lord, and we ask the same question, we may expect a similar answer. Christ does not tell us in so many words, I want you to influence So-and-So, I want you to prepare the way for My coming into the heart of such and such a person. You may not know beforehand what heart you can influence. There is literally no limit, as far as you are concerned, to the influence that you can have on all sorts and kinds of people, in all sorts and kinds of

places, if you are filled with the Spirit of God. If we could only realise more certainly and vividly that it is character—personality—that prepares the way of the Lord, it would make a great difference to us. Christ said of John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the way before Him, that he was a burning and a shining light. And exactly in proportion as that is true of us, we shall be able to do the work for which we are sent. And we shall be answered as S. Peter and S. John were answered. Circumstances, that is to say the direct guidance of God, will bring you to the right people to see the light shining in your soul and to be warmed by its heat. No Christian ought to speak of *chance* circumstances. If God governs all things in heaven and earth, He governs the choice of persons who are to meet you in daily life. Meet you at home, first of all. That is the most obvious place, and sometimes the very hardest place in all the world, to let our light shine. And they will meet you at work, meet you in your social intercourse, your recreations, your holidays. And those are the hearts that He has selected for you to influence. At least we cannot complain that our opportunities are too narrow. Christ sends you to every human being that

comes, in any sort of way, within the circle of your life. They won't, of course, tell you that you have influenced them ; they won't write grateful letters to say how much they have been impressed by your beauty of character. It is just as well that they don't. It might be an encouragement, but it would certainly be a severe temptation to pride. And the moment that spiritual pride taints the soul, it begins at once to spoil the sweet savour of your influence. But if your character is strong and beautiful—or rather let us say if it is growing strong and beautiful—God alone knows how many lives you will help. You will know hereafter, when temptations to pride—all temptations of any kind—are things of the past. And so He says to us, Go and by your character prepare My way into the heart of every man, woman, and child with whom circumstances bring you into contact.

This applies to every Christian ; but it has very special point for clergymen. Before we were ordained we wondered where we should get a title. ' Where will Thou that I prepare ? ' And God led us by circumstances to the parish or other work that He had chosen for us. But sometimes it happens that a man begins to

think he is in the wrong place. He doesn't get on with his vicar ; or the curates one after another are impossible ; or some of the leading parishioners are troublesome ; or the climate is trying ; or the vicarage is far too large. Or he is in a small, isolated parish with very little to do, and he feels that he would give anything to get to a place with some real interest and steady work in it. Or he is in a busy town parish and cannot get a curate, and doesn't know how much longer he can go on. Such a man would be perfectly right, of course, in praying to God to let him move elsewhere, if and when it should be His will. But so long as God shews him by circumstances that he is to stay where he is, that is the place where his character is to do Christ's work. Those who are posted far in the country with next to nothing to do, are given a special and peculiar opportunity of deepening their character by prayer and devotion and study and silence. They have received as clear a call as any monk or hermit to spend a large part of their time in this way. (I often wonder why clergymen, in town and country, do not make more use of their churches for reading and prayer. Is it unkind to suggest that in some cases they are shy of being caught doing it ?

That is certainly true of a good many other Christians.) If a man who has been for a time in a small and lonely village is afterwards guided to a larger and busier centre, he ought to be able to go to it with a character ripened by prayer, deepened by communion with God, enriched by meditation and reading, in a way that nothing else could have done it. Some of the greatest of the world's spiritual leaders prepared themselves in this way—Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, S. Paul, and above all our Lord Himself. Each of them was guided into the solitudes

*That separate from the world his breast  
Might duly take and strongly keep  
The print of Heaven.*

And the words of our parable can apply also to many young men and women, who have most of their life before them. It is quite possible that God wants you to take up some definite piece of religious work for Him, as a clergyman; or a missionary—in one of the many branches of missionary work—a rescue worker, a teacher, or something else to which you can dedicate your life. 'But I can't,' you say, 'I have my work fixed.' But nothing in this life is so fixed that it cannot be changed. If you

ask, 'Where wilt Thou that I prepare?' or, as S. Paul said, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' and if something in the guidance of circumstances (reading this chapter, for instance) suggests to you that God is calling you, you will find that your work, or profession, or trade, or whatever it is, is not at all too fixed for you to give it up, with all its possible or certain prospects, and take a commission in Christ's army. The war gave us thousands upon thousands of shining examples of young men who cast to the winds all that was dearest in life to take a commission. And the Church of God is in sore and urgent need of young men and women who will do the same in the great war that she is fighting. Do go on asking the disciples' question till you are quite positively certain that you have received the divine answer. In asking it you can use the words in the collect for the first Sunday after Epiphany: 'Grant that I may both perceive and know what things I ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same.'

But now we can go further. We are using our story, as I have said, simply as a parable; so we are free to put another meaning into it. Some people will say, 'Circumstances? But

circumstances are dead against me. It's all very well for clergymen to talk. Quite right and proper of course ; it belongs to their profession, and they are doing their duty. But you simply don't know my difficulties.' I have no doubt that you have difficulties. I don't want to minimise them ; and I am quite sure that God knows them too well to minimise them. Only let us remember one thing in passing. If you tell your difficulties to God, it is of no use to magnify them, because He knows them too well for that either. There is not a difficulty or a trial in my life but Thou, O God, knowest it altogether. We often sing, ' My soul doth magnify the Lord.' And if we are really magnifying the Lord, it will keep us from magnifying anything else. But let us picture some of the difficulties.

First, there are the physical difficulties. Some people will say, I am in constant ill-health ; I get tired so easily ; I am knocked up with the slightest exertion. Or I am getting old ; and if I kneel down even for a short time I cannot pray or think about the highest things because my body usurps all my attention. Or I am getting so short-sighted that I cannot read the Bible or any other book easily. Or I have such



bad nights that I feel too weary all day to be religious. Or I have to work so hard all day, racketing about, or using my eyes and brain and hands, that when I have a little leisure I am too sleepy or too strained to think about prayer. Or I am in frequent pain, and my body doesn't give my soul a chance.

And then there are other difficulties which are not entirely physical. I have so much to think about, so many children or other people to look after, so many worries or anxieties, so much of my time and thoughts completely occupied with necessary duties, that I simply haven't time to lead a spiritual life ; in fact, I am gradually losing any real desire for it. I know I ought, but it really is frightfully difficult. Or again. You don't know the sort of people I live with. How can I lead a spiritual life when I have to be constantly looking after a difficult and exacting invalid ? If I could only have a little more joy and interest and appreciation ! But it is nothing but small pieces of drudgery from morning till night. Nothing that I do seems right ; there is always some friction, or nastiness, or ingratitude, and that makes me feel bad and irritable and wicked. Or I am married to a husband, or a wife, that doesn't seem to care

for religious things in the least. He, or she, is annoyed if I want to go to Church ; and it is next to impossible for me to get alone and say my prayers, even if I were in the mood to do it. Or the house is small, or noisy, or uncomfortable ; and the servants are trying, or I can't get any ; and expenses are high ; and the things of this world swamp all the better longings that I used to have before these troubles and worries came.

Or, once more, I have temptations. I have a great many, of course, but one especially. Perhaps it is even an inherited weakness. And that one temptation makes spiritual progress impossible. I can't conquer it, and I have given up trying.

One could go on for a long time like this. If I were ingenious enough, I daresay I could touch nearly all the difficulties of every reader of this book. But if every reader asks Christ our question, ' Where wilt Thou that I prepare ? ' the same answer will be given to each single one. You are to live for Me in whatever conditions circumstances have placed you. You are to go and prepare, you are to illuminate others by letting your light shine, *in* your difficulties. Your work in helping others by your influence is not to be in spite of your difficulties, but by

means of them. Your difficulties are the method that I have expressly chosen and planned and determined for giving to your character and personality a strength, a power, a tenderness, a magnetism, that they could never get without them.

Let us end this chapter with a well-known example—S. Paul's thorn, or rather 'stake,' in the flesh (2 Cor. xii. 7-10), a terribly trying physical weakness which attacked him at intervals. When it came on, as he tells us in the Epistle to the Galatians (iv. 13, 14), it made it quite uncomfortable for anyone to be with him. After each of the first three attacks he begged and implored God to take it away. But he received the reply, 'My strength is made perfect *in* weakness.' The divine strength, which made S. Paul so marvellous a missionary in preparing the way of the Lord, was increased and deepened and made to grow in him because of, and by means of the difficulty. And he accepted it, and brought himself into the grand spiritual condition in which he could say, 'Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities—think of it ! *pleasure* in infirmities—

in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake ; for when I am weak then am I strong.'

Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? Where wilt Thou that I prepare ? As soon as you can get quiet by yourself, ask Him the question from the various points of view that this chapter may have suggested to you ; and then wait in silence and listen for His answer.

8k 22"

## XII. THE MASTER SAITH.

WHEN the two disciples had been guided by circumstances to the right place, they were to say to the owner of the house, 'The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber?' The disciples had asked, Where? And now the Master Himself asks, Where? But while the answer to the first is supplied by the guidance of God, the answer to the second lies wholly with the free choice of the householder. And our Lord knew that if they said, *We* want to prepare the Passover, *we* want to come to your house, *we* want a furnished sitting-room to-night, the owner probably would not listen to them. The multitudes who flocked to Jerusalem for the feast were so great that residents in or near the city could let rooms for almost any sum they liked to ask. Human nature in those days was not more averse to profiteering than it is to-day. And two men with horny hands, and scarred, weather-beaten faces, and an obviously Galilean accent, would be unlikely to be able to pay the price asked. But our Lord evidently

knew the householder, and had probably received previously his promise of the room. And so the disciples were told to appeal to him with His authority. 'The Master saith.'

There is our parable; and the meaning is plain. I make no attempt to suggest novelties. We want to steep our minds afresh in the old truths that we know well, but so easily forget; the old ideals that we so often hold up before our eyes, but so often fail to reach. If we are to prepare the way of the Lord by drawing hearts into Christ's captivity, we must come to them straight from Christ; in the name of Christ; with the power and persuasion of Christ. S. Paul could say to the Corinthians, 'We are ambassadors in the name of Christ, as though God were beseeching you by us' (2 Cor. v. 20); and we also want to be able to say to the souls of men, 'The Master saith'; 'The Master beseeches you by us to let Him into your guest-chamber.'

But He cannot speak by us at all unless we are in very close touch with Him. I have sometimes been in a tram when the bar connecting it with the electric wire has jumped and left the wire; instantly all the lights go out and the tram stops. Because it is separated from the

source of supply, light and progress cease ; the tram is dead and useless. That is what happens with every sin. We are separated, instantly, from the source of the supply of divine power. If we repent and confess our sin, God forgives ; and that means that He takes us back into union, fellowship, contact with Him, and light and progress immediately become possible once more. Here is a Christian going out to his day's work. What is his day's work ? It is quite inaccurate to say that his day's work is that of a lawyer, doctor, banker, merchant, school teacher, clerk, shop assistant, mechanic, farm labourer and so on. All these various tasks are only incidental to men's lives, necessary for the providing of their bread and butter. The day's work of a Christian is to influence others by his character ; that is, by Christ within him. But he has given way to some sin or failing. We need not specify what ; every man knows that it is quite easy to say or do or think something wrong before he gets to his work in the morning. And if he is not sorry, he is out of contact with Christ when he goes into contact with human souls. He knows, in theory, that sin separates him from God ; but he commits, in actual fact, one sin after another ; little slips of

temper, little acts of selfishness, thoughtlessness, forgetfulness of others, self-indulgence, momentary lapses from truth, momentary lapses from purity of heart. His soul is cut off from its source of supply, and until he gets back into union with God he is in a non-spiritual condition; he cannot live his life with a drawing force, an appealing persuasion, that comes straight from Christ. And so we are brought again to the great truth that the first and primary and chiefest need of our soul's life is penitence. Lent is not the only season of repentance. When the Lord had risen and appeared unto Simon, I am sure it was a day of the profoundest repentance that that disciple had ever known in his life. If the human soul is to continue with light and progress, its return to the source of supply must be incessant.

But while the tram, in contact with the electric wire, receives all the power that it can have or need, the soul is in constant need of a continually increasing supply. Its progress is very slow, and always needs to be further quickened; its light is very dim, and always needs to be made brighter and ever brighter. The authority and persuasion with which we can say to others, 'the Master saith,' are never as strong and appealing



as they might be. That is why we influence others so little. The Master cannot speak through us with the compelling force that He might speak ; and so the owner of the heart where Christ wants to gain an entrance often doesn't listen to us. There is a limit to what the human intellect can receive and assimilate ; but there is no limit to the capacity of the soul. By receiving more it grows, and therefore needs more. The glorious satisfaction of true religion lies in the fact that the more of God we take in, the more hungry and thirsty we become ; and the more we long to get, the more He will give. It is because we do not eat and drink enough that we are not as hungry and thirsty as we might be. We can often kneel down to pray, filled with this one desire, ' My soul is athirst for God ' ; ' I want to get more of God into me, to penetrate deeper and deeper into Heaven, for the sake of others. I want more influence over all the miscellaneous people that I meet day by day, more spiritual force, more drawing power ; and so, O God, I come to Thee to drink Thee in, in order to be able to pour Thee out.' The divine that is in us evaporates and dries up so quickly with the ordinary wear and tear of life that it needs to be incessantly replenished.

That is the meaning of the words which describe the Christian, ' Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' Out of the depths of our being can flow only what we have drunk in. And the reason why our work in preparing the way of the Lord is so feeble is that we are not thirsty enough to go on eagerly drinking more and more and yet more.

Preparing

### XIII. WHAT GOD HAS PREPARED.

**B**UT lastly, we reach a point where our parable cannot help us at all. When Christ came into the room prepared for Him, the owner of the house, so far as we know, did not join in the feast. But eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for them that take Him in, and give Him possession of their lives, and enter into Christ's captivity. He uses us to prepare the way, but He Himself prepares the feast.

There are three passages in the Gospels which speak of what God has prepared for us. And when we study them in turn, we find that they carry us again over the ground that we have been travelling. The first is in the words of the aged Simeon : ' Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation which Thou hast prepared ' ( Luke ii. 30). ' Salvation ' is an often misused word, because it is not always understood that its meaning is derived from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the thought of salvation nearly always includes that of victory over

enemies. We are not saved passively, once for all. Christ by His life, and death, and resurrection did everything, of course, that was necessary to provide salvation for us once for all. But we must throw ourselves into the scheme ; we must make the power of His atonement our own ; we must work out our own salvation, because it is God that worketh in us. It takes us back ~~yet again~~ to the thought of penitence. When we repent—really repent, not merely recite the words of confession—God does more than wash our guilt away ; He offers us fresh power to conquer. Absolution is a loosing from chains. It is cleansing from the past, and more power for the future struggle, that together make up salvation.

That is the first thing that God has prepared for the heart that opens the door and takes Him in. And then, when we want to increase that power within us by hungering and thirsting for God, we hear Him say, ‘ Behold I have prepared My dinner.’ ‘ Come, for all things are now ready’ (Matt. xxii. 4, Luke xiv. 17). If any man open the door of his heart, ‘ I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me ’ (Rev. iii. 20). Let Christ in, and you will have a feast ; and, as we have said, the more you feast,

the more you will want. And that is true of the sacramental means that He has given us of eating and drinking the divine Life. ~~The story which has been our parable ends with the Communion feast in the guest-chamber.~~ The more we partake of it with real longing, and after the preparation of real penitence, the more we want it, and the more we get from it.

Once again, ~~as we have been thinking all along,~~ we want salvation and we want an increase of power, not primarily for our own sake but for others. See what has been prepared for us. The sons of Zebedee asked that they might sit the one on Christ's right hand and the other on His left in His kingdom. But He said, 'To sit on ~~My~~ right hand and on ~~My~~ left is not ~~Mine~~ to give, but it shall be given to those for whom it is prepared by ~~My~~ Father' (Mark x. 40). God was not going to select two solitary and privileged individuals to live in closest contact with His Son. That glory and delight was for everyone for whom it was prepared, everyone who would drink of the cup that He drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with, and ascend with Him in His train of captives, passing through the Heavens into Heaven itself. His right hand and left are not

two places ; they express the spiritual condition of union with Him. Now that gives us the very thought that we want. Those who are living with their hearts in captivity, near to Christ, touching Christ, are joined to Him 'in His Kingdom,' that is His sovereignty. They can wield His royal influence, can bring His kingly power to bear upon others, can persuade in His name. They can prepare the way of the Lord with success, because, seated on His right hand and on His left, they are in a position to say, 'the Master saith.' They speak, and think, and live, and move, and have their being, on His ~~very throne.~~ He is 'at the right hand of God,' that is in perfect union with the Father, wielding His power ; and those for whom it is prepared are similarly at the right and left hand of Christ, in union with the Son, and wield His power. 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne' (Rev. iii. 21). They reign with Him, and with Him sway the hearts of men, because they have been crucified with Him, because they continually repent and go on repenting, and continually pray and go on praying, and continually mortify their thoughts and feelings and wishes

and impulses, and because they continually hunger and thirst for more and more and more of Him. To them belong His victorious salvation, and His divine feast, and therefore His royal power over men.

I pray that every reader of these chapters may prove true the remaining words of our parable from S. Luke: 'And the disciples went, and found as He had said unto them.'

Suppose Gal. iv. 31 is the fact?  
Your point is correction

45 Monday in Lent

#### XIV. THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

*things of Liberty and*  
**T**WO more chapters are added to this little book, one to discuss a problem, and the other to suggest a word of encouragement. The latter will follow up the thought of the ascended Christ's supreme 'gift unto men,' the gift of His Holy Spirit, in which all other gifts are involved and included. [Here we are concerned, ~~once more~~ with the thought of captivity. We are to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. When He gives us His command, Go and prepare My way before Me, if we are true disciples we must obey. When He lays down the law of the spiritual life that none can reach His right hand and His left except through suffering and crucifixion, it is a law which must be obeyed. But on the other hand we read ~~such~~ <sup>the</sup> words as these: 'We are not children of the bondwoman but of the free' (Gal. iv. 31), <sup>or</sup> 'the glorious freedom of the children of God' (Rom. viii. 21); <sup>or</sup> 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (2 Cor. iii. 17); 'stand therefore in the freedom



wherewith Christ has made us free ' (Gal. v. 1). How can we speak of captivity and obedience in the same breath with freedom or liberty? S. James twice over is bold enough to speak of ' the law of freedom ' (i. 25, ii. 12); and S. Peter says that Christians are to be ' as free,' and yet ' as slaves of God ' (I Pet. ii. 16). The words seem, at first sight, to present to us a contradiction in terms. When a man is freed from chains, or locked doors, or slavery, or restrictions, he can do as he likes and go where he pleases. And the word ' law ' might seem to give us yet another restriction. Thou shalt do this, and Thou shalt not do that, hardly appear to leave a man free. If he is obliged to obey, that is, if he is punished when he disobeys, where is his freedom? But does a parent enslave his children when he teaches them to obey him? Does he give them freedom when he spoils them, and allows them to disobey him? S. James quite clearly says No. His expression ' the law of freedom ' gives us a new and higher idea of what freedom means.]

[It has this meaning in the natural as well as in the spiritual world.] If freedom means to do precisely what we like, why shouldn't we all drink poison whenever we feel inclined to?

[ There are what we call the laws of health ; and if our body is to be free from illness, we must obey them. The laws are absolute, for they are laws of God's own making. ] ' In Him,' as S. James reminds us, ' is no variableness neither shadow of turning ' (i. 17) ; and the laws of health are an expression of the unvarying orderliness of His mind and being. They are absolute, and the penalty for breaking them is certain. [ Which, then, is best—to be free to do as you like with your body, or to be free from illness ? The one is the wrong, and the other the right meaning of freedom. ]

Or take some instances of a different kind. [ Not many years ago the aeroplane, the submarine, the telegraph, and many other inventions, were undreamt of. All these involve certain natural laws—the law of gravitation, the laws which ' govern,' as we say, the strength of metals, electricity, chemistry, and a hundred other things. And these laws were all existent in the world then as now ; and then as now they were absolute, inexorable. But men had not learnt to understand them, and therefore could not obey them. And because they could not obey them, they were not free. They were unable to send a message to the other side of the

planet in less than the twinkling of an eye ; they were unable to travel and take photographs at the bottom of the sea ; they were unable to fly through the air at a hundred miles an hour. They were unable to do countless things that they can do now, and therefore they were not as free as they are now.] Every discovery in the natural world that has ever been made has been a discovery how to be more obedient to law.

[If a man goes up in an aeroplane and disobeys some law involved in flying, would he be prepared to justify himself by saying that he is a free man and can do what he likes ? We know that the result of his disobedience will be catastrophe, immediate, and very likely fatal.] How can we get it into people's minds that freedom to do as we like is not real freedom ? Some words of our Lord are just as true of flying as of anything else : ' Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free ' (S. John viii. 32). So long as you don't know the truth about gravitation and many other things, you cannot fly ; you are not free. This may help us to understand S. James' meaning a little better. The ' law of freedom ' is the law obedience to which gives freedom.

Look at it in another way. In human life

there is an obvious and far-reaching law that 'union is strength.' If ten million people act with one aim and purpose, all helping each other, they will effect far more than if they all act with different aims and purposes. If every one of them says 'I am a free man and can do as I like,' with anarchy and chaos as the result, that nation cannot progress. And nothing can keep them in a strong and progressive unity if they are not obedient to law. So long as men insist on the freedom to do as they like, their nation is helpless. Helplessness is not freedom, as Russia has taught us.

And there is another aspect of the same truth. Christ prayed that His followers might be one. If they had remained one, it is not too much to say that the whole world would have been gained for Christ's captivity long ago. But the Church was split into hostile camps at a very early date, and has gone on splitting ever since, because men insisted on saying, We must have freedom—freedom to do as we like and think as we please. Some of the split fragments call themselves 'free Churches'; some have taken the further step into what is often called 'free thought.' The true equilibrium between authority and freedom, the ideal balance of ordered

liberty, is no doubt hard to preserve. But so long as Christians do not recognise that the freedom won by obedience to law is of a higher kind than the freedom of sheer independence, the Body of Christ is not free, but hampered and well nigh impotent.

[ We cannot turn to a single department of thought or life without finding the same principle unalterably at work. And we need not expect to find any difference when we think about the spiritual life of our souls. Some of us may have had moments when we were swept with a longing desire to grow in holiness. We have read of some of the great saints, modern as well as ancient ; and we feel that we are not in the least like them. We are so ordinary, so weak, so easily tired of goodness and of God. ] Why can't I be really and truly a saint ? Why have some people been able to reach it and not I ? God wants to get continuous, ceaseless pleasure from me ; and He doesn't. It is not that I do very bad things ; but I don't feel that I am growing. I have to confess the same stupid sins and mistakes time after time ; the same laziness, the same self-indulgence, the same irritable temper, the same fear of other people. I am tied and bound, when I long to be *free*,

free to mount up with wings as an eagle, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. Moments when our soul catches fire with these • eager yearnings are rare and wonderful. And then we step out again into the common daily life, with its bothersome duties and troublesome people, its amusements and routine, its steady down-dragging temptation ; and everything that we longed for seems to become unreal and impossible. [And all because we have not learnt to *obey*. The man who knows and obeys the relevant laws can mount his aeroplane and fly freely. We know the laws of the spiritual life, and we don't obey them, and therefore we remain earthbound and helpless.]

[We know the law, for instance, that he that loseth his life—his Self—shall find it. Obedience to that law means a steady, continuous, consistent sacrifice of Self. But if, instead of that, we live our life on the do-as-I-like method, the result is not freedom but catastrophe ; ' he that saveth his life shall lose it.' ]

[We know the law that spiritual progress is impossible without prayer, as the progress of a steam engine is impossible without steam. But instead of storing our life with a full, driving, irresistible supply of this source of energy, some

of us try to get along with a minimum of it.] Some of our prayers are slipshod and hurried ; some people start the day without any ; and some people jump into bed without any. And when we do say some, we often put no meaning into half the words we use. Some people say mechanically the same words at twenty, thirty, forty, that they used to say when they were ten. That is not the way to get driving energy for spiritual progress. [Let us remind ourselves again that God is one in whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning. He has given our spiritual life a law which shall not be broken, the law of the absolute necessity of real prayer. And nothing in heaven or earth will induce Him to alter it. If we obeyed it, our progress would be free.]

[Once more. We know the law—or the truism, or the self-evident proposition—that if a divine gift is to be of use to us we must use it. The supremest of Christ's 'gifts unto men' is His gift of Himself by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We possess the possibility of the whole, full, boundless, energy of God. And we don't use it. We *can* use it ; it can be as a burning, blazing furnace within us, producing the steam power which can drive us forward. And

we *can* change the hearts, and comfort the sorrows, and strengthen the wills, and lighten the darkness of the men and women round us ; we can draw them with the cords of a man, the cords of love, to yield themselves to Christ's captivity and follow in His train ;—or we could, if we obeyed the divine law. Our love would be free, and therefore our spiritual work and progress would be free, if we obeyed the perfect law, the law of freedom.



## XV. THE GOSPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of all that He began to do and teach, until the day that He was taken up. The Gospel of the Holy Spirit is the good news of all that Jesus Christ has been doing and teaching ever since. The former volume began when the Holy Spirit overshadowed the mother of the Son of God ; the latter volume began when the same brooding, fructifying power manifested itself in the Church of the sons of God. 'They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.'

How glorious it sounds ! The flaming torrent of fire fell upon them from on high ; it seemed to fill the very room where they were sitting ; it seemed to beat audibly on their ears with the thunderous sweep of a rushing, mighty wind ; it wrapped them in its flood, it caught and mastered them, it swept through their souls—that divine hurricane—and lit their hearts with a dazzling radiance ; it thrilled their nerves and loosed their tongues ; they were carried, as in a chariot of fire, out of this world with its sorrows, and darkness, and sordidness, and cruelty, and sin—carried out of the reach of fear, out of all

thought of self, out of their present, out of their past—carried with one glorious and unimaginable leap into the presence of God. Men might wonder at the strange phenomenon, men might deride, and say they were drunk, men might hate, and persecute, and kill. But it meant to them nothing—less than nothing. God had caught them and carried them captive, and all earthly things, earthly cares and desires and anxieties and ambitions were blotted out. Whether they were in the body or out of the body they could not tell. God had caught them; and they threw themselves into His arms, and were lifted into heaven. It was overwhelming, it was intoxicating, it was unbelievable. But it was true. And through all the dark days to come, it carried them on with a force that all their adversaries could not gainsay nor resist. They laughed at persecution; they rejoiced in sufferings; they gloried in their infirmities. Difficulties and opposition were only fresh chances of victory to be won by the resistless might of that divine energy which remained the abiding possession of their lives. That was Pentecost. The book of the Acts is full of Pentecost from beginning to end. S. Peter and S. Paul are the two chief characters

that stand out in the narrative ; but the whole body of the disciples were white hot with the same fire. They sold their lands, they pooled their goods ; they were driven out by persecution, but the flame only spread as the oil of the Holy Spirit was continually poured into it. First in Judaea, then in the whole of Palestine, and then on through large tracts of Asia Minor, over half Europe, and many other places besides, the fire caught and burnt and swept. Within thirty years multitudes were added to the Lord over an area which stretched from Ethiopia to Rome.

With that breathless drama before us we can understand better the way in which S. Paul speaks of the Spirit. He explains clearly in his epistles what he means by a Christian. The Christian, he teaches, is not an ordinary man. The ordinary, natural, man possesses a body and a soul—the same soul or natural life that is possessed by the animals. But the Christian is much more than that. He has been translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love ; he has been lifted, body and soul, and carried over into a new world, a new atmosphere, plunged into a new ocean, into the realm of the Spirit. He lives in the Spirit ; he walks in the

Spirit ; he thinks and acts and has his being on a new and exalted plane of existence. He is dead to sin. He used to be a slave to it, but he has no more connexion with it now than a dead slave has with his old master, who used to oppress and flog and torment him. His sins were taken by Christ and nailed to His Cross ; he was buried with Him when he was baptized into Christ and became a living member of this new Spirit-filled body, the Church. He is a different being, a new creation, old things have passed away, all things for him have become new ; he is a son of God in a new and more marvellous sense than he ever was before. He is now no longer a natural man, but a spiritual man. His life has been transfigured by the Lord, the Life-giver, the Spirit of God.

And we can also understand what was meant by Christian love—the love of the brethren. It was the close oneness of heart, the deep and necessary sympathy between those who had been translated together into this new world of hope and strength and inspiration. Quarrels were unthinkable so long as men revelled together in the fellowship of the Spirit. There were quarrels once or twice ; but they were a horrible anomaly when the old self reasserted

its baneful power ; they were utterly contrary to the new life of the Spirit. Differences of opinion were swamped in the all-mastering tide of the love of God. Differences of rank and sex and race ceased to be worth considering. In this new world of the Spirit there could be no preference for Jew or Greek, male or female, bond or free. All were necessarily and obviously one in Christ Jesus.

That is the Christian ideal. That is Christianity as it was intended to be, as it once was. And what is it now ? Where is the hot flame with which Europe, Asia, Africa, America, and Australia ought to be on fire ? Where is the triumphant faith, the unquenchable hope, the selfless love ? Where is the transfiguration of life, the freedom from old sins, the courage that laughs at danger, and rejoices in difficulties and glories in infirmities ? And where is the unity and sympathy between Christian and Christian ? As we look on this picture and on that, we are tempted to say that Christianity is dead and gone ; that the Spirit is for ever quenched, and Pentecost an unreachable glory of the far past. The war—that nightmare of four and a half years—raged, for the most part, between Christians. Christians are divided party against party, class

against class, sect against sect. And the spreading flame of enthusiasm and zeal, the missionary energy which ought to be daily adding multitudes to the Lord, seems to have flickered out like a cheap candle. The glad song of Whitsuntide seems to mock us ; we have forgotten the music, and the instrument is long out of tune ; nothing is left us but jangle and discord. So we are tempted to say.

And yet think what that means. If Pentecost is a bare event of the dead past, it means that God the Father is dead, and the risen Christ is dead, and the eternal Spirit is dead. It means that there is no love left in the world, no self-sacrifice, no strong sense of duty. And we know that that is a lie. In old pagan Rome things were done daily, so hideously cruel, so unutterably filthy, that we dare not name them ; and they were done easily, naturally, without a twinge or qualm of conscience, done as the merest matter of course, by individuals and communities, as part and parcel of ordinary life. Cruelty and filthiness and many other crimes are still found amongst us ; but everyone knows that they are wrong ; they are done in secret, and visited with condemnation if discovered. The normal life of all mankind who have

emerged from actual savagery is on a different plane from that of ancient Rome. And it is the Spirit of Christ outpoured at Pentecost that has made it so. The Spirit of Christ, the Son of the Father, is still at work ; and the Father worketh hitherto ; and Christ works. The outward shape which the enthusiasm of Pentecost took could not be universally maintained. In those lives in which it was never more than mere excitement (and I have no doubt at all that there were some) it was better that it should have died out. And if it had been limited to its outward and visible expressions, it would have died before the end of the first century. Thank God, white heat is possible without flame. That will always go on warming the world. But flame without white heat will leave the world cold. If our Christianity means anything, we *have* been translated into the kingdom of Christ ; we have had our sins nailed to the Cross ; we have been buried with Christ ; we have been created anew. We can, to-day, live and walk and think and pray in the new world of the Spirit. And we know some people who do. Think what it can mean to us. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of

knowledge and true godliness, and the Spirit of holy fear—all these can be ours. The Spirit of *wisdom and understanding*, which can give us sympathy with those who fall as we fall, and with those who differ from us in views and ideas and ideals. The Spirit of *counsel* by which we can always be helpful. The Spirit of *strength* which will conquer our sins, and make us live a life of self-discipline and self-forgetfulness, and give our character a force and an influence without which all outward expressions of enthusiasm are worse than useless. The Spirit of *knowledge*—knowledge of ourselves as others know us, and as God knows us ; knowledge of men, knowledge of God. The Spirit of *true godliness*, which neither cares to please nor fears to displease anyone except Him. And the Spirit of *holy fear*, that will make us shrink from sin as we shrink from something loathsome ; and will send us to our knees in prayer, bowed in awe before the majesty of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Christianity is not dead. Its white heat is still burning at the heart of the world. And the call of the Gospel of the Holy Spirit is an ever fresh call to throw ourselves into the fire, to burn away from us all that is not divine, and to start out again to warm the world.

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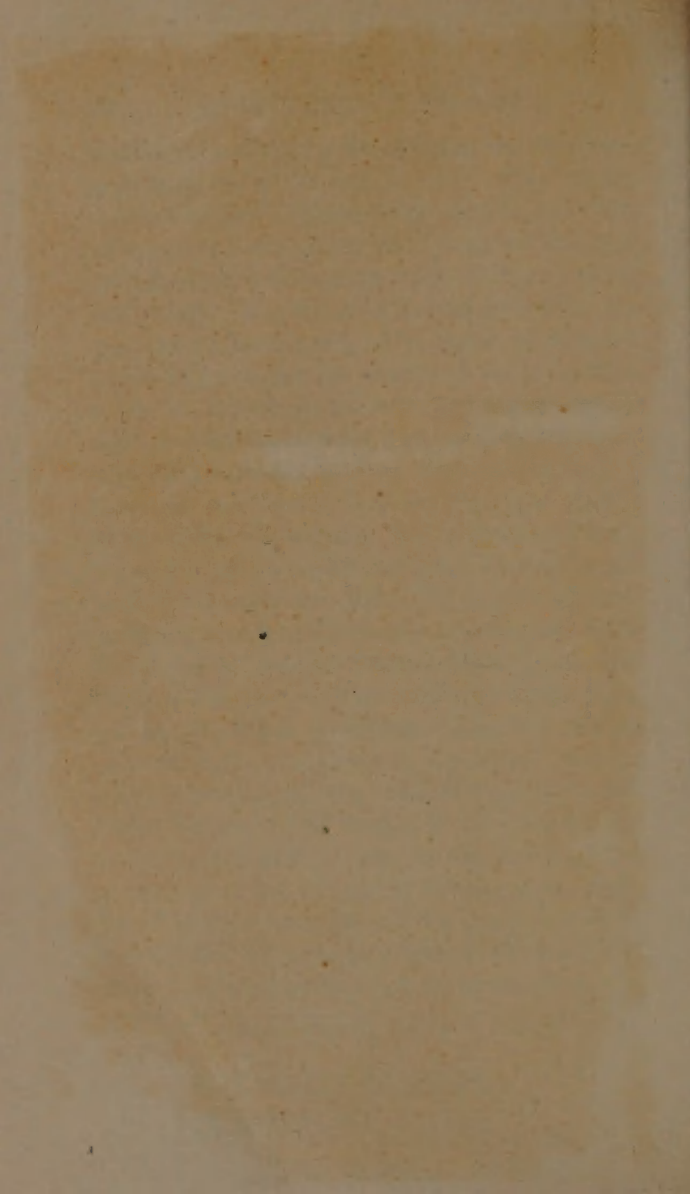
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